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WHAT MEN READ IN CAMPS

By M. S. DUDGEON, *Secretary Wisconsin Free Library Commission (Camp Librarian, Great Lakes, Ill.)*

You will pardon me, I trust, if I begin with a very commonplace remark, and that is that a man in camp reads books upon the subjects in which he is interested, just as you do, just as I do, just as any trained worker reads. Now, the one subject in which the man in the camp is most intensely interested is: winning this war, and as a result he is anxious to read anything that will help him lick the Kaiser.

In the beginning we possibly over-estimated the need of recreational reading; we possibly over-estimated the function that we had in keeping up the moral standard and in keeping the boy out of mischief. It develops that the officers succeed fairly well in keeping the men busy and out of mischief and they don't need our help as largely as we thought they might.

To illustrate how the men are training themselves for war: In one naval camp the men are rushing up on trigonometry. There are in that camp 250 copies of trimonometries (every one of them, by the way, a gift collected in response to telegrams, and some of them contributed by publishers). Thousands of men are studying those 250 much used copies of trigonometries simply because there are thousands of men in that camp who know that trigonometry is useful in helping them navigate the vessels in which they will later be placed, and other thousands realize as they never did before that trigonometry will prove useful in helping them point guns on the strongholds of the Kaiser. They are studying geography in that camp because they realize that in war they must know the waterways of the world. There are 2,100 men in that camp studying aviation, and 2,200 men studying aviation and wireless telegraphy are necessary to win the war. Everywhere the men are

reading those things, largely technical non-fiction, which have a direct bearing on the work of the war.

I do not want to be understood as saying that the men are not reading other things and reading them extensively. It has been the common experience that men read poetry. Service, for example, is popular; but they read generally the sort of poetry that any men in civil life read. They read drama and they read essays. They read, of course, a good deal of travel relating to the countries where some of them hope to go. They read fiction, although less than we thought they would read. My observation is that in fiction probably the western story is more popular than anything else. They read Zane Grey, Stewart Edward White, Owen Wister. Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn" is popular. They read detective stories. They read the variety of things that all of us read when we read for recreation. I want to say this further, that you will not get a class of reading men that read fiction that is cleaner and more wholesome than do the men in the camps.

You might be interested in some of the percentages. The general average, as near as I can get at it, is about fifty-fifty, instead of being seventy per cent fiction and thirty per cent non-fiction, as in many public libraries. In one camp repeated tests showed that the non-fiction was a little over seventy per cent and the fiction a little less than thirty per cent.

The chief point that I wish to make is that men will read in camp anything that will assist them in becoming more proficient in the diversified activities of war. This means that we must specialize in supplying specialized non-fiction, and you can hardly be too generous in anything you can do toward furnishing these books for these men.

It seems there are two possible suggestions for the future. So far as we inside the camp are concerned, we must remember that the men in camp are very busy and it is going to be more and more essential that we bring this technical and non-fiction reading material closer to the men. We must study the situation in camp and plan engineering books, for example, in the headquarters or near the headquarters of the engineers; machine gun companies must have the books on machine guns near them.

For those outside of the camps it has

occurred to me that future book campaigns will have to be more special in their character; there will have to be a definite effort to collect certain definite books that experience has shown are needed in the camps and must be secured for the camps.

To sum it all up then, it seems to me, the outstanding principle is that the technical, non-fiction books which will help win the war are the things that the men are reading, are the things they want to read, are the things they ought to read and the things which we as librarians must provide and help them read.

WHAT MEN READ IN HOSPITALS*

By MIRIAM E. CAREY, *Supervisor, Minnesota State Board of Control (Field Representative, Hospital Service)*

What a man reads in a hospital depends on two things: the man himself and the supply of books.

To put a man to bed does not change him fundamentally. His education, tastes and habits remain unaltered when he lays aside his uniform and dons pajamas and a bathrobe. His reading will be influenced by all his personal endowments and qualities.

The character and degree of his illness will also have much to do with what he reads. If his is a surgical case he will have time and strength to read more than he ever read before, and he will ask for the kinds of books he has always preferred. He will want to keep up with his studies and will do some serious work while he is in confinement.

If he is quarantined for mumps or measles, as so many of our "heroes" have been, he will need first of all to be diverted. Detective stories and the cowboy and wild west tales are what he craves.

The state of a man's mind—whether he is worried about his family or merely homesick—will influence his choice of books. He may have to be coaxed before he will take the trouble to read.

The supply of books must also be adequate to meet the needs of foreign-born soldiers who know only their mother tongue. Then there are those American-born men whose education is so rudimentary that they must have very simple English, very clear print and plenty of pictures in order to read at all.

There must be technical books for the soldier students: good, stirring fiction for the depressed, homesick and anxious, and for the suffering, scrapbooks, things easy to hold, and pictures.

Given a supply of books adequate to meet these varied demands and the soldiers in the hospitals will read more books in a given time than their more fortunate fellows who have more freedom but less leisure.

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